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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000098

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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT, ROL COORDINATOR, IRMO/IPCC

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SUBJECT: BADR ORGANIZATION IN KIRKUK COOPERATING ON SECURITY AND
POLITICAL PROCESS

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CLASSIFIED BY: JBIGUS, PRT LEADER, REO Kirkuk, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Badr Organization claims to be a multiethnic group in northern Iraq. Badr representatives claim most Shia Arabs in Kirkuk are Ba'ath loyalists. The Badr representatives claimed to defer security responsibilities to the Iraqi Army and police. The Badr Organization is postponing provincial election plans until after negotiations on national government formation, due to political alignments and agreements that might result. The Badr representatives compared Kirkuk's security situation to Fallujah. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) IPAO's on April 16 met with Nasir al-Din Abdullah Muhammad and Nihad al-Baqal of the Badr Organization to discuss political issues in Kirkuk. Muhammad, a Sunni Kurd, leads the Badr executive committee in northern Iraq and Baqal, a Shia Turcoman, is the deputy head of Badr northern Iraq. Muhammad led the delegation. He said the Badr Organization had approximately 5,000 members in Kirkuk, earning the group one electoral seat from the province on the Iraqi Council of Ministers.

Badr Shows Multiethnic Face in Northern Iraq

¶3. (C) Muhammad emphasized that Badr was a multiethnic organization, not just a Shia Arab party. When we asked Muhammad what enticed him, a Sunni Kurd, to join the Badr Organization instead of one of the revolutionary Kurdish parties, he said he was attracted to Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) founder Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim's message for unifying all Iraqis, not just those in Kurdistan. Muhammad said after the Kurds gained autonomy in 1991, the Badr Organization opened several offices in northern Iraq.

Most Shia Arabs in Kirkuk Ba'ath Loyalists?

¶4. (C) Muhammad estimated that approximately 2-3,000 of the more than 10,000 Shia Arab families in Kirkuk were affiliated with the Badr Organization. Muhammad claimed that SCIRI, Badr, and the Sadrists each had a stronger presence in northern Iraq than Da'wa. Muhammad asserted, however, that most Shia Arabs in the Kirkuk province were Ba'athists. The majority of Shia Arabs who came to Kirkuk during Saddam's regime were poor and uneducated, and Saddam was able to lure them to the north because he provided jobs and homes for them. As a result, many

remained sympathetic to the Ba'ath Party, according to Muhammad.

Criminal Ba'athists in Hawijah Leadership

¶15. (C) When asked how the U.S. could help improve the security situation in the Hawijah and Za'ab areas of Kirkuk province, Muhammad said the U.S. needed to revamp the entire local police force, eradicating the criminal Ba'athists within its ranks. He complained that former senior Ba'athist officers worked for the Iraqi police, Iraqi Army, and public services in Hawijah. He recommended that the U.S. look for projects to employ Kirkuk Arabs and get them off the streets. Muhammad said that the leader of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, Salih al-Mutlaq, was from the Kirkuk province and had tribal influence there. Muhammad said that Hawijah residents were urging Mutlaq to work with the Unified Iraqi Alliance, due to Mutlaq's close relations with the Shia Arabs in Baghdad.

Badr-SCIRI Relations in Kirkuk

¶16. (C) Muhammad said that SCIRI and Badr shared the same ideology, and both groups were led by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim. He added that Hakim oversaw three separate entities: SCIRI, Badr, and Shahid al-Mihrab. According to Muhammad, the three groups were divided according to responsibilities: SCIRI - political; Badr - recruitment; and Shahid al-Mihrab - Islamic education. He said that more Badr than SCIRI members were present in northern Iraq because Badr had an older presence there.

¶17. (C) When asked if Badr provided security for the SCIRI office in Kirkuk, Muhammad said Badr deferred those responsibilities to the Iraqi Army and police in Kirkuk. He added, however, that Badr provided security tips to the local authorities. He did not know who attacked the SCIRI office in late February 2006, but suspected it was a terrorist group. Muhammad said the three most active terrorist groups in Kirkuk

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were Ansar al-Islam, Tawhid al-Jihad, and Ba'athists.

Comparing Kirkuk Security Situation to Fallujah

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¶18. (C) Muhammad complained that the Coalition forces after Operation Iraqi Freedom prevented the Badr Organization initially from entering Kirkuk. He compared Kirkuk's security situation to Fallujah, with 50 percent of the terrorist attacks occurring in southern (read: Arab) Kirkuk. (NOTE. An overstatement meant to highlight security concerns in the Arab areas. END NOTE.) He described Kurdish Police Chief, General Sherko, as weak and that the provincial government should replace him immediately.

Comment

¶19. (C) A Sunni Kurd and a Shia Turcoman representing a primarily Shia Arab group in Kirkuk should be considered when evaluating their positions. Some of their views surprised us, especially their belief that most Shia Arabs in Kirkuk were Ba'athist loyalists. The cooperative relations between Badr and the Kurds at the national level probably affect comments made in Kirkuk.
BIGUS